ECE Highlights

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE No. 13 March 1992

PROTOCOL ON VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS SIGNED AT GENEVA

Mr. Flavio Cotti, President of the Swiss Confederation, and Mr. Gerard Hinteregger, Executive Secretary of UN/ECE, at the Ministerial Meeting of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

A Protocol on the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), mainly hydrocarbons, or their transboundary fluxes was signed at Geneva on 19 November 1991 by 21 countries. This Protocol is the outcome of three years of intensive negotiations held under the auspices of the UN/ECE. It is the fourth in a series of specific international agreements implementing the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) of 1979. Earlier Protocols were concluded in 1984, 1985 and 1988, dealing with long-term financing of the Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP), with the reduction of sulphur emissions or their transboundary fluxes by at least 30% and with the control of nitrogen oxides emissions.

The signature took place on the occasion of a ministerial meeting of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution held from 18 to 22 November 1991 in Geneva. The session was attended by environment Ministers and high-ranking government officials from the 32 Parties to the Convention and was chaired by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Flavio Cotti.

VOCs are mainly emitted through incomplete combustion of fossil fuels in motor vehicles. They are released into the atmosphere during refining, distribution and use of petrol and during the use of products containing solvents such as paints, glues and inks.

By signing the VOC Protocol, the Parties will commit themselves to reducing their VOC emissions by 40% between 1988 and 1999 at national levels or within specified tropospheric ozone management areas (TOMAs), i.e. areas within countries where activities causing VOC emissions take place. Some Parties qualifying for this option may choose to freeze their VOC emission by 1999.

Efforts are being pursued vigorously within the Convention with a view to developing the scientific methodology to quantify the sensitivity of ecosystems to acid and nitrogen depositions and to the impact of photochemical oxidants. Taking into account the sensitivity of ecosystems within the ECE region, considerably greater emission reductions will be required than those achieved through commitments made so far within the framework of the CLRTAP. The Parties, therefore, urge timely negotiations leading to additional protocols to the Convention.

ECE UPDATE

Two New UN/ECE Environmental Conventions Completed on Industrial Accidents and Transboundary Waterways

The *Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents* and the *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes* are now ready for adoption by the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environment and Water Problems at their resumed fifth session to be held in Helsinki (17-18 March 1992). As both instruments were recommended by the CSCE Meeting on the Environment held in Sofia in 1989, this achievement will be reported to the forthcoming Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Follow-up Meeting, also to be convened in Helsinki in March 1992.

The *Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents* will enhance active international co-operation at the regional level in order to promote the implementation of the relevant policies and reinforce and co-ordinate action for the prevention of, preparedness for and response to the transboundary effects of industrial accidents. It also deals with international co-operation concerning the exchange of information, research and development, exchange of technology and mutual assis-

tance in case of accident. The Convention codifies the general obligation of States to notify each other in the event of an accident, or the imminent threat of one, which is capable of causing transboundary effects.

The *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes* is intended to strengthen national and international actions aimed at protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary waters, both surface and ground waters. The Parties to the Convention will be obliged, among other actions, to undertake comprehensive measures for the prevention, control and reduction of pollution, particularly by hazardous substances, of waters from point and diffuse sources.

Both Conventions render effective the "polluter pays" principle as a tenet of international environmental law. They both represent the manifestation of a strong political will for strengthening co-operation in the ECE region in the field of environment pursuant to the recommendations made by the participating States of the CSCE at their Vienna and Sofia meetings.

Combined transport agreement signed by 16 countries

Sixteen countries have now signed the European AGTC Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations. Elaborated by the UN/ECE and open for signature since April 1991, the agreement provides a legal framework within which international combined transport services can be developed and made more efficient. The 16 countries now signatories to the agreement are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland and Turkey.

At present covering road and rail transport, and envisaging enhanced use of direct rail services, the agreement has provisions for the subsequent inclusion of inland water transport. The primary attraction to the customer is the reduction in journey times, and hence improved delivery schedules, made possible by the agreement. International co-ordination and co-operation in planning and setting of priorities for the development of a coherent European combined transport system will also be improved.

New UN/ECE working party on agriculture

A new Working Party on the Economics of the Agri-food Sector and Farm Management held its first meeting in October 1991, at which 19 countries participated, together with the FAO and the European Confederation of Agriculture. The Working Party in particular addressed the transformation of the agriculture and food processing sector of the countries in transition to market economies. Profitability, price competitiveness and compliance with internationally accepted health and environmental limitations were signalled as the guiding elements in the transition process. The Working Party advocated professional education and technical retraining of labour. It was agreed to hold a workshop on the specific problems of the transformation of collective farms into viable market-oriented units in Hungary in June 1992.

Welcoming the Baltic States to Energy Efficiency 2000

"East Europe and Energy Efficiency as a Business Opportunity—the Case of the Baltic Republics" was the subject of the fourth event of Energy Efficiency 2000 held at the Stockholm Trade Fair in October 1991. The main feature of that meeting was the attendance, for the first time, of the Ministers of Energy of Latvia and Lithuania and of the Deputy Minister of Energy and Industry of Estonia. Presentations were made on the energy needs of the Baltic republics and on energy-efficient technologies suitable for their use. International financing mechanisms for energy-efficient technology trade were presented by senior members of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Swedish Trade Development Bank.

Joint ventures in Ukraine, new legislation in the Russian Federation

The remarkable speed of change in the former Soviet Union is reflected in the promulgation in July 1991 by the former USSR and the Russian Federation of the first laws on privatization. An analysis of these laws is found in No. 10 of UN/ECE's *East-West Joint Ventures News*, which is devoted to events in the former Soviet Union. The Newsletter also gives an account of foreign investment in the Ukraine, providing information on the growth of foreign investment and its industrial composition. At the beginning of 1991, the Ukraine had attracted 209 joint ventures or 7.2% of the total number of joint ventures registered in the former Soviet Union.

JUST PUBLISHED

Call for a second European recovery programme

The latest edition of the *Economic Bulletin for Europe* received extensive media coverage. Journalists highlighted the UN/ECE's proposal for a new recovery programme of co-ordinated economic aid for the Soviet Union and the countries of eastern Europe. Drawing on the experience of the first European Recovery

Programme, the Marshall Plan, this second European recovery programme should incorporate all existing assistance programmes and activities, both bilateral and multilateral, and should focus particularly on technical assistance in setting up the structures essential for a successful market economy. The report forecasts that the transition countries will slide deeper into depression in 1992 leading to increased social unrest and pressures to dilute or abandon the reform process. The estimated overall drop in industrial production for Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia is 20 per cent for 1991 and 9 per cent and accelerating for the former Soviet Union. In this situation, it is urgent for western governments and international organizations to decide how they could best support the reform process and then organize assistance on a scale necessary to ensure success. As a priority, western nations should remove restrictions on imports from the area. The *Bulletin* contains a detailed review of economic developments in the ECE region. The foreign trade of the eastern countries is analysed with particular emphasis on the implications of the collapse of the CMEA. A special section is devoted to the external relations of the Baltic States.

Economic Bulletin for Europe, Vol. 43, ECE/TRADE (XL)1. UN/Sales No. 91.II.E.39. Price: $US 60.00

Reverse osmosis plant in the Netherlands processing 180,000 kg/hr of starch solution (Paterson Candy International Ltd.)

Study on food-processing machinery

A major study entitled *Food-Processing Machinery, including Packaging Techniques*, prepared under the auspices of the Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation of the UN/ECE, provides a global overview of recent developments in product and industry structures and international trade of the food-technology industries. Current trends and foreseeable developments are summarized in order to illustrate the expected growth of the regional food-processing complex and its adaptation to new challenges such as rapid changes in food consumption patterns, higher quality, health and safety requirements and the ongoing transition process in central and eastern Europe. The countries of the UN/ECE region form the core of the global food technology sector, accounting for some 80 per cent of world machinery production and nearly 90 per cent of total exports—the largest exporters being Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

Food-Processing Machinery, including Packaging Techniques, ECE/ENG.AUT/43. Sales No. E.91.II.E.30. Price: $US 40.00

OTHER SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

GENERAL

Catalogue of ECE Publications, March 1992.

AGRICULTURE

UN/ECE Standards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables, (ECE/AGRI/55/Rev.2). Sales No. E.91.II.E.42.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Annual Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe for 1980, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990. Sales No. E/F/R.91.II.E.ll. Price: $US 25.00

INDUSTRY

Iron and Steel Scrap, ECE Steel Series 1991 (ECE/STEEL/74). Sales No. E.91.II.E.37. Price: $US 25.00

The Steel Market in 1990 (ECE/STEEL/73). Sales No. E.91.II.E.35. Price: $US 25.00

Engineering Plastics (ECE/CHEM/81). Sales No. E.91.II.E.32. Price: $US 30.00

STATISTICS

Statistical Journal of the UN/ECE, Vol. 8, Number 2 (1991).

TIMBER

Possible Market Effects of Forest Decline Attributed to Air Pollutants in Europe (ECE/TIM/57).

Timber Bulletin Annual Forest Products Market Review 1990-1991, Vol. XLIV, No. 5.

Forest Products Trade Flow Date 1989-1990, Vol. XLIV, No. 6.

Monthly Prices for Forest Products, Vol. XLIV, No. 7.

TRANSPORT

Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP) (E/ECE/TRANS/563). Sales No. E/F/R.91.II.E.38. Price: $US 26.00

WHERE TO ORDER

The publications listed with sales prices may be ordered from: **United Nations Bookshop, Sales Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland** and a number of bookstores in the ECE region. Send cheque or money order in US dollars made payable to: UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS.

Those publications listed without a sales price may be obtained from the Information Officer, Economic Commission for Europe, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Seminar on the Restructuring and Management Techniques in Steel Industries in Countries in Transition

18-22 May 1992

This Seminar will be held at Dabrowa Górnicza near Katowice, Poland, at the invitation of the Huta Katowice Steel Combine on behalf of the Government of Poland. It will focus on the different approaches to restructuring the steel industry in countries of central and eastern Europe within the context of the global world steel market. The Seminar will also deal with ways of introducing modern management technologies through the advice of experts from western countries.

Third Workshop on Rehabilitation Engineering: REHAB-3

24-27 May 1992

REHAB-3, the third and last in a series of workshops on rehabilitation engineering, will take place at the Centre for Joint and Muscle Pain Therapy at Trebon-Spa, Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. It will concentrate on problems faced by the UN/ECE member countries in transition in restructuring their health care systems and, in particular, the medical and socio-economic care of the disabled and the elderly population. The possibility of launching special supportive programmes oriented towards the implementation of new schemes for the provision of technical aids and the introduction of improved structures of rehabilitation services will also be discussed.

The series of three workshops on rehabilitation engineering constitute the principal contribution of the UN/ECE, the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering (IFMBE) and the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO) to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled People, 1983-1992. It is therefore envisaged that REHAB-3, among other topics, will consider the outline and methods of work for the preparation of a final publication on the recent trends and foreseeable developments in rehabilitation engineering in the ECE region.

Workshop on Restructuring State-owned Enterprises in Economies in Transition and Main Policy Issues

9-11 March 1992

A series of workshops is being organized on problems relating to the restructuring of State-owned enterprises and related policy issues. The first in this series of workshops is to be held in Baden, Austria. It is being organized by the Vienna Institute for Comparative Economic Studies with the assistance of the UN/ECE. The purpose of the Workshop is to explore practical approaches which can be used to restructure State-owned enterprises. The Workshop is intended to provide an opportunity to consider the action which Governments need to take in order to encourage this process of transition and to allow participants to gain an insight, based on western experience, of how to go about the restructuring process. A further important objective of the Workshop will be to evaluate the contribution of entrepreneurial organizational skills in the reform process and the interrelationship between market forces and government industrial policy. The Workshop will bring together some 45 to 50 participants from both western Europe and North America as well as from central and eastern Europe. A second workshop, to be held in Romania, is currently under preparation.

ECE CALENDAR

SELECTED EVENTS

1992

March

3-5	Steering Committee of the Energy Efficiency 2000 Project, second session
3-6	SENIOR ADVISERS TO ECE GOVERNMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND WATER PROBLEMS
6	*Ad Hoc* Meeting on Global Energy Efficiency 21
9-12	COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
10-13	Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles
10-20	Joint Meeting of the RID Safety Committee and Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (Berne, Switzerland)
16-17	Working Party on Combined Transport
17-20	Working Party on the Facilitation of International Trade Procedures
23-24	Seminar on Road Safety
30 - 2 April	Meeting of Experts on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce

April

7-15	FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

May

4-7	Work Session on Population and Housing Censuses
18-22	Meeting of Experts on Coal Trade, Statistics and Transport (Sydney, Australia)
18-29	Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

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